

## Hiding Belgium's Priceless Paintings Under Rivers

### How Millions of Dollars Worth of Art Treasures Have Been Securely and Secretly Sunk Beneath the Waters of the War-Torn Little Kingdom to Save Them from the Germans



"Trusted Belgian officers carried out the painting. Secretly and with the utmost caution it was lowered in its hermetically sealed tube down to the bed of the river. Its exact location is known to few. Thus ended the last scene in the tragedy of the priceless Rubens 'The Descent From the Cross.' It lies under the waters of the Scheldt, safe from alien hands—conceivably even lost forever to the world!"

London, Dec. 18.  
THE Belgian authorities at Antwerp have buried the most precious of their art treasures secretly and securely beneath the River Scheldt in order that the German invaders may not lay hands on them.

Alarmed by the loss of pictures and precious objects at Liege, Louvain and other cities, the Belgians determined to take effective precautions to prevent an even greater calamity at Antwerp.

It is estimated that the art treasures of Antwerp are worth \$1,000,000,000. It need hardly be added that to preserve them for unhappy and ruined Belgium is a really great national service.

Photographs have already been published showing the Belgians removing Rubens's "Descent from the Cross" and other famous masterpieces from the Cathedral of Antwerp. But it was not known what had been done with them.

They were placed on trucks specially constructed for this purpose and carried away to the military headquarters, where they disappeared behind closed doors. "The Descent from the Cross" is the chief of the series of colossal works by Rubens that decorated the Cathedral. This work, with its wonderful representation of human figures, its pathos and its tragedy, is by many considered the greatest picture ever painted.

A thrill went through the world at the thought that this great picture might be destroyed by bombs dropped from an airplane or shot to pieces by bullets or even taken away from the country where it had been since its author's lifetime.

It is now known how "The Descent from the Cross" and the other pictures were safeguarded. Inside the military headquarters they were removed from their frames and rolled up, at the same time being carefully preserved from injury and racking by quantities of burlap and soft packing. Each roll was then inserted in a heavy watertight metal container and

schools are represented in large numbers. Great anxiety and uncertainty are felt concerning the fate of other masterpieces of early art that were in the Belgian cities now in the hands of the Germans. Brussels, Ghent and Bruges, which possess the chief art treasures after Antwerp, are, of course, in the power of the Germans. In some cases it is known that pictures have been destroyed; in other cases there is reason to believe that they have been taken to Germany, but in the great majority of instances complete uncertainty prevails.

The most admirable works of the Flemish school in the opinion of many critics are those of the Brothers Hubert and Jan Van Eyck, who lived in the fourteenth century, at the dawn of the painting art. Their most beautiful work is the triptych called "The Adoration of the Lamb," which has long been an ornament of the great church of St. Bavon, at Ghent. It is reported that this work already reposes in the Berlin Museum under the care of the celebrated Dr. Bode, who once bought the alleged bust of "Flora."

The fate of the wonderful series of paintings by Hans Memling in the Hospital of St. John, at Bruges, is also in doubt. At Louvain many famous old masters were undoubtedly destroyed by bullets and fire. Among them was the triptych by Dierck Bouts, representing "The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus."

Bouts was the great early artist at Louvain as Memling was at Bruges.

The finest work of Bouts is said to have been his "Last Supper." This was originally the centre of a large altarpiece, of which only this part was in the Church of St. Pierre at Louvain. The wings were separated from it many years ago, and in recent years they became the property of the museum at Berlin, in which the Kaiser takes so great an interest.

Shortly after the sack of Louvain by the Germans it was stated positively that this centerpiece had been destroyed, but

Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" Being Prepared for Its Journey Through the Streets of Antwerp. This Famous Painting Is Now Resting in a Metal Tube Somewhere Under the Scheldt.



BY THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE



Carting Away a Priceless Rubens Masterpiece from the Antwerp Cathedral, the First Step in the Effort to Keep It Out of German Hands.



Belgians Carrying a Rolled Up Old Master to the Place Where It Is Put into the Metal Tube That Protects It During Its Secret Submersion.

a correspondent now declares that it has rejoined the wings in the museum at Berlin.

Describing the destruction of the art treasures of Louvain, Professor E. Gilson, of the University of Louvain, who has now come to London, writes:

"In the centre stand the walls of St. Peter, now a grinning silhouette, roof and belfry gone, the walls blackened and caved in. In front stands the Hotel de Ville, dominating everything and almost intact. Further on, the remains of Les Halles, entirely destroyed, except for the arcade of big pillars of the Salle des Pas Perdus. The library and its treasures are entirely gone.

"Entering St. Peter's by the Rue de Malines, I find what was the big bell among the ruins. The vaults are for the most part caved in; there is a continuous stream of stones falling, so that we could not enter it without danger. Everything is burned. If the paintings by Bouts and van der Weyden have not been saved in time they must have perished. The jubilee in the choir is standing.

"I walk all over the open space where the city used to stand. At the Sept Coins everything is lying on the ground. The Rue des Ecumeurs is burned; to the right the Audience is burned; the upper part of the Rue du Canal is burned, including the house of the dean and the students' house. The Rue de Diest up to St. Peter's is a heap of ruins, bricks, scrap iron and charred beams. No trace of a sidewalk is

visible, and from the ruins the most disgusting odors are rising and enveloping everything."

Elsewhere in the path of the battling armies irretrievable damage has been done to priceless art treasures. It is now realized that much of this might have been avoided, if the authorities had hidden the various objects.

There is another "Descent from the Cross," by Rubens, at Arras, and this is said to have been destroyed by shell fire. Another work that suffered there was Van Dyck's "Christ in the Tomb."

Many art works in the Cathedral at Rheims were damaged or destroyed. Among the pictures thought to have been lost are "Nativity," by Tintoretto; "Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalen," by Titian; "Christ and Angels," by Zuccherro, and the "Crucifixion," by Germain.

The treasury of the Cathedral contained many costly reliquaries and priceless

church plate, among them a chalice and monstrances of the Twelfth and Fourteenth centuries, vessels and ornaments used at the coronations of different kings of France and the Sainte Ampoule. The last is the successor of the Ampulla Remensis, which a dove is said to have brought from heaven. With the holy oil which this flask contained all the kings of France were anointed down to Louis XIV.

The Antwerp authorities knew of these many catastrophes before their city was attacked, and, taking warning in time, they hid their treasures effectively under the river. There is little doubt that Belgian municipal officers in other cities also saved many of their most precious possessions by hiding them, but in the state of chaos and ruin that prevails it is impossible to know just what has happened. For years, perhaps for centuries to come, the patient delver will unearth hidden art treasures from the soil and the rivers of Belgium.

## Why the Moon's Horns Have Nothing to Do with the Weather

THERE is a firmly ingrained superstition which connects the rainfall with the moon's cusps. Many people believe that on the position of the crescent moon changes of the weather depend and can be easily foretold.

Professor A. K. Bartlett, the noted astronomer, has called attention both to the superstition and to the phenomena. He says that at the time of the new moon the cusps, or horns, of the crescent sometimes lie in a line which is nearly perpendicular with the horizon and at other times in a line nearly parallel with the horizon. In the former instances the moon is commonly described as a wet moon, and in the latter as a dry moon. Owing to the changing position of the crescent, seen in the western sky after sunset, such expressions as "If the moon lies so the water cannot run out we will have a draught" are to be heard. Or "A wet moon is one upon which the hunter can hang his powder horn."

Yet it is a fact, which everybody who went to school should know, that the crescent moon always appears upon its back in the Spring and upon its end in the Autumn. These positions occur regularly every year, rain or dry. A little thought makes this plain even to a boy.

The change of direction in the moon's horns is caused by the altered position of the moon when she is at the new. It has relation to the sun and the earth and depends upon the difference in the declination of the sun and the moon. If the moon is farther north than the sun soon after it is "new" the sunlight strikes upon her and she appears with her horns upturned.

If the moon is farther south, the light reaches around her disc to the northward and her horns are nearly vertical, as if the crescent moon rested upon one of them.

There is no definite relation between her position and the position of her cusps or horns. In fine, this feature of her aspect seems so changeable and capricious that it has been regarded as a weather gauge.

In reality there is a simple connection always present. The line which joins them is always at right angles, or perpendicular to a line drawn from the sun to the moon, so that the horns are forever turned directly away from the sun.

The precise position in which they will stand at any time is, consequently, easily foretold, and has as much to do with the weather as mud with milk. The logic in superstitions is the same as the logic in patent medicines and ignorance generally.

Sailors consider the appearance of the new moon in November as an unfailing sign of "weather." Farmers also predict a mild or severe winter from it. If the moon, they say, comes "standing up" there will be a pleasant winter. "Stand up moon, lay down farmer."

Since, however, the moon is always near the "ecliptic," the line which joins the horns is nearly always at right angles to the "ecliptic." Since this angle changes, so the position of the line which reaches to the horizon varies. With regard to the moon more than half full, these changes are not noticeable. With new or crescent moon, however, it is perfectly plain and attracts attention.

The line which joins the horns cannot be ever actually upright when the sun is below the horizon, for a line must always be square to the great circle which passes through the sun and moon. When, therefore, the moon is above the horizon and the sun is below, this great circle is inclined to the horizon and a line perpendicular to it is correspondingly inclined from the vertical. The same explanation fits the waning crescent of the old moon before sunrise soon after Spring begins, when the horns are turned in the opposite direction.